**AETHICUS ISTER, Cosmographia [AETH.ISTR.Cosmogr.]:** CPL 2348; Kenney 21 and 329; LM 1: 192; NCE 14: 691-2; BCLL 169-70.

MSS 1. Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Scaliger 69: HG 839

2. London, British Library Cotton Vespasian B.X: HG 386

3. London, British Library Harley 3859: HG 439

4. ?Salisbury, Cathedral Library 110: HG 718: see below

Lists None

A-S Vers None

Quots/Cits ?Anon.Sol.Sat.II: see below

Refs None

The Cosmographia of Aethicus Ister is a fantastic and wide ranging geographical treatise, derived in part from Isidore’s Etymologiae, that purports to have been translated from Greek by “Hieronymus presbyter.” While Aethicus Ister may have been the actual author--Wüttke’s edition of the Cosmographia presents him as such--Löwe suggested in 1951 that the text and the author’s name were an elaborate literary hoax directed at St. Boniface by the Irish Virgil of Salzburg, abbot of St. Peter’s in Salzburg from 764-784. This attribution places the text in the late eighth century, but those who argue against it date the text anywhere from the beginning of the seventh century to the end of the eighth. Löwe’s argument is now much disputed, most recently argued against by Prinz in his edition of the Cosmographia (1993; see also Herren 1989) and most recently defended by Zelzer (1993). Whatever its authorship, the work was apparently popular, surviving in at least twenty-three manuscripts.

The earlier of two manuscripts of the Cosmographia known in Anglo-Saxon England is the Leiden MS, which Bishop (1966) dates to the second half of the tenth century and identifies as a product of St. Augustine’s, Canterbury. Galloway (1989) suggested the hand is that of St. Dunstan, but Budny (1992 p 137) disputes the premise of this identification. The Cotton MS, which contains Anglo-Saxon interlinear glosses (AC, C.65), may have been copied at Worcester in the late tenth or early eleventh century from the Leiden MS. In turn, the Cotton MS may have been the exemplar for Harley 3895, which Prinz dates to the end of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century (1993 p 64). The Salisbury MS, dated to the late 11th century by Gneuss, is dated to the early 12th century by Webber (1992 pp 22-4), who believes that it was not copied from either the Cotton or Leiden MSS (1992 pp 70-1).

In addition to the manuscript evidence is the suggestion by O’Keeffe (1991) that the geographic list in Solomon and Saturn II derives material, place names in particular, from the Cosmographia.

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D. Dew

J. Schrunk Ericksen